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ABSTRACT

This trainer's guide is intended to assist supervisors of work-based career training projects in familiarizing students with abbreviations, acronyms, and terminology that are commonly used in the workplace. The guide is one in a series of core curriculum modules that is intended for use in combination on- and off-the-job programs to familiarize youth with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in the workplace. Included in the guide are the following components: project information, a summary of the content and approach of the guide, supervisor's notes, off-the-job tutor's notes, background information, lists of tasks and core skills, an action plan that includes suggested learning activities, supervisor and trainee review sheets, and an assessment form. (MN)

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Youth Training Scheme

CORE EXEMPLAR WORK BASED PROJECT

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Clear as mud

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ESF

CORE SKILLS PROJECT

YTS

OTF No: 1

PROJECT No: M 6

TYPE Individual

The Further Education Staff College
Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6RG ✆ 0761-62503

ISBN 0-948361-05-0

ASSESSMENT OF CORE SKILLS

This series of projects contains a number of different formats for recording assessment of core skills. These formats are offered for experimental purposes; none is proven as the 'best' method. All are based on the principle that feedback to trainees is a necessary part of the learning process and that such feedback should include information on core skill development.

Further work is being carried out on the methods of assessing achievement of core skills in work-based learning and of how to log such achievement on a record which trainees can take away from YTS. Some of the results of this work will be included in later MSC/ESF Core Skills Project publications.

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT ARE WORK-BASED PROJECTS?

Work-based projects are learning materials which aim to make the most of all the possibilities for developing trainees' skills, knowledge and attitudes in the workplace. They build upon everyday workplace tasks to provide experience of the whole range of YTS learning opportunities.

The projects in this series have been tested with managing agents as part of the YTS Core Project, which is jointly financed by MSC and the European Social Fund. In some cases managing agents will be able to use the projects as they are. In others they will need to be adapted to the circumstances of a particular workplace or to the aims of a particular scheme. Some managing agents will prefer to produce their own projects. For such cases these examples aim to demonstrate some principles of good design in work-based learning materials. These principles are:

To encourage trainees to learn by doing.
To make the most of all the experiences which are available to trainees in the workplaces.
To start from a real task which is seen as relevant by all parties involved — trainees, workplace supervisors, trainers and off-the-job tutors.
To help trainees see the relationships between things learnt on- and off-the-job.
To base the assessment of achievement upon trainees' actual performance in tasks.
To look for all the opportunities for learning which arise from a task and, in particular, to help trainees to develop the core skills. These skills, in number, communication, problem-solving and practical activities, are used in a wide variety of tasks and are essential if trainees are to achieve competence in those tasks*. They are the skills — of finding out information, planning how to do things, overcoming difficulties and so on — which help trainees to learn more quickly in new situations, either in the same workplace, in a different one, or in the world outside work.

Such skills are required naturally by the workplace tasks in these projects and, in requiring trainees to go beyond the task itself, the projects deliberately *add* to the range of core skills which are required in an everyday working situation. This is especially important for some of the skills of communication and problem-solving which trainees are often not given the opportunity to exercise in work experience.

These principles can be incorporated in projects for all placements and for trainees of all ability levels. Although the projects in this series follow a common format, there is no single 'best' style. Nor is any special expertise in writing necessary. Good work-based projects can be produced by anyone who is determined to help trainees to exploit all of the potential for learning in work experience.

*A technical manual 'Core Skills in YTS' is currently available from MSC. It is supported by a short introductory leaflet and a practitioner's guide for supervisors. A separate manual is available on computer literacy/information technology.

PROJECT INFORMATION

This work-based project is designed to familiarise the trainee with the abbreviations and technical jargon commonly used within the workplace. It can be especially daunting in organisations both large and small where this type of verbal shorthand is in everyday use. To the new-comer it can appear as though everyone is talking a foreign language. Staff who are familiar with the terms used can baffle, quite unintentionally, the new employee with a barrage of information which makes little sense to those uninitiated in this new language.

Whilst the new entrant remains unsure of the meaning of the abbreviations used he/she may be less able to respond correctly and efficiently to instructions. It is also important to realise that in some work situations a lack of understanding of the terminology used can have quite serious Health and Safety implications.

This project, then, gives the trainee the opportunity to find out the meaning of commonly used abbreviations. He/she will do this chiefly by asking questions of experienced workers and, thereby, encouraged to become more aware of the language problems.

The project originated from the need to collate abbreviations, particularly in job titles in common use within a large COUNTY COUNCIL. It, thus, served a dual purpose in that it helped the trainee in the induction process to find out more about abbreviations in common use and also enable this information to be collated and circulated.

The project could be easily modified to allow a trainee, in almost any work situation, to find out the meaning of the abbreviations and/or technical terms in common use.

Its two part structure adds further flexibility to the project. Either part can be done separately. The first part could be given to the trainee during his/her first few days in the Company, with the second part waiting until he/she is more confident.

SUMMARY

The trainee is asked to familiarise him/herself with the commonly used abbreviated titles within the workplace. It is a project to promote an understanding of the internal 'communications' system but in a practical way by asking colleagues to explain abbreviations they use and then presenting the findings of the enquiry in a form which could be used by other new entrants as well as to up-date existing staff.

SUPERVISOR'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

This work based project is designed to focus the trainee upon the CORE SKILL areas of: number; communication; practical skills, and problem-solving. Wherever possible, it is also designed to provide learning opportunities to improve personal effectiveness; to provide wider knowledge of the world of work and elsewhere; and to furnish the trainee with skills which can be transferred to other situations.

The essence of the work based project is that people learn more quickly and effectively by actually doing something.

The following notes are designed to help you, your staff, and the trainee, so that the project can be carried out with a minimum of disruption to normal work activity.

1. Where relevant, please advise other staff that the trainee will be doing the project;

2. Please ensure that the trainee has read the project details and understands what is required;

3. Please ensure that the trainee is aware of any aspects of safety, hygiene or security which might touch upon the project;

4. Please ensure that the trainee appreciates that good planning will make the task easier. Wherever possible, and before the project starts, the trainee should be encouraged to take responsibility for his/her learning by estimating time, deciding on equipment and materials, identifying possible hazards and other problems, and generally "thinking the project through".

5. Upon completion of the project discuss with the trainee the activities he/she has been engaged in. What problems were there? What has he/she learnt? Would he/she tackle the project differently?

Encourage the trainee to complete the trainee's review page.

For this particular project the following information may be useful:

This project will involve the trainee in producing an accurate list of the meaning behind commonly used abbreviations within the firm. Many newcomers to the world of work will be reluctant to acknowledge 'ignorance' of the language used in order not to be a nuisance or to avoid being exposed as a new entrant to the firm. This assignment will give the trainee a learning experience in itself by allowing him/her to discover important terms and their usage through meeting the people in the workplace. The end product will meet the needs of the trainee and at the same time provide a useful document for future new entrants.

Assistance will be needed in the initial stages and this can be done by providing the trainee with a few commonly used abbreviations which everyone in the firm needs to know. Wherever possible the trainee should be allowed to explain the nature of the exercise to the appropriate 'contacts'.

It would be useful once the list is compiled in draft form to get approval for access to a word-processor so that it can go out in a standard form and also be easily amended at a later stage.

It is intended that this project should be done by the trainee early in the training programme and may be best suited as part of the induction procedures.

The main role of the supervisor is to check for accuracy and provide guidance as to where information can best be found.

Names

TRAINEE .....

SUPERVISOR .....

TUTOR .....

Times

Please fill in the table below. This will show the time you spend on completing this project. The first column has been filled in as an example. Make another table if you need more space.

DATE	16/6			
START	2·00			
FINISH	3·30			
TIME SPENT (HOURS)	1½			

BACKGROUND

As a newcomer to the council you will soon discover that staff will tend to shorten certain titles and information by referring to initials. You may also see this on forms or posters etc., within the workplace. In order that you can carry out instructions quickly and efficiently, it is important that you become familiar with the most commonly used titles as quickly as possible. This project will enable you to find out what the titles mean, it will also help other people in a similar situation to you in that they too are confused by this strange 'language' of initials. For example, many people are familiar with the terms Y.T.S. and M.S.C., but may not know what the initials stand for. Abbreviations then become commonly used and it is expected that everybody understands them.

SITUATION

Any firm or organisation which uses initials or abbreviated titles to describe personnel or systems within the workplace.

PURPOSES

This work-based project will help you to find out the meaning of the abbreviations and technical terms that are in daily use in the COUNTY COUNCIL.

Doing this project will enable you to learn more about the COUNTY COUNCIL. It will also help you to develop your CORE SKILLS (number, communication, problem-solving, and practical skills). Increasing your abilities in these skills will make it easier for you to change jobs and retrain when the need arises.

The tasks you are asked to do are outlined below, together with the most important CORE SKILLS that they contain. When you have finished each task, ask your supervisor to tell you how well she/he thought you did in the task, and record this on the Assessment Form near the back of this Project. This record will be needed to complete your Certificate at the end of your YTS year.

WBP TASK	ACTIVITY	CORE SKILL
1.	Start making a list of abbreviations and their meaning.	Provide information in writing, and by means of tables and diagrams. 7.3
2.	Find out the meaning of abbreviations and technical terms by talking to people you work with and looking up information in technical manuals.	Find out information by speaking to other people. 6.1 Find out information from written sources. 6.2
3 & 4	Plan out how to present your information for easy reference.	Plan how to present information. 9.6
	Make out your list and keep it up-to-date.	Provide information in writing, and by means of tables and diagrams. 7.3
5.	Discuss the next stage of your project with your supervisor.	Discuss with other people in the workplace how things are to be done. 8.6
	Telephone the people your supervisor suggests you talk to and make arrangements to meet them.	Provide information by speaking to other people in the workplace. 7.1

6.	Organise your information under given headings.	Decide which category something belongs to.	10.2
7.	Check the accuracy of the abbreviations and their meaning.	Check the accuracy of written information.	11.5
8.	Plan how to organise the information on your list for easy reference.	Plan how to present information.	9.6
	Make out your list.	Provide information in writing, and by means of tables and diagrams.	7.3
9.	Discuss with your supervisor who in the Company should have a copy of this list.	Discuss with other people in the workplace how things are to be done.	8.6

FURTHER ACTION

11.	Plan how to present information to your group.	Plan how to present information.	9.6
	Lead the discussion on the use of professional titles.	Provide information by speaking to other people in the workplace.	7.1

Each CORE SKILL is identified by number in the PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE to the YTS CORE, which contains advice and guidance on what CORE SKILLS are and their uses. The numbers are included here for ease of reference.

ACTION PLAN

During your first few days with the Council, you will have come across many abbreviations and new terms that you do not understand.

For example, your supervisor may have asked you to go and get a piece of HSS or a ream of A5 or the M.D's extension number. You clearly cannot act on the instructions if you don't understand the meaning of the initials and terms being used.

This project asks you to discover as many of the abbreviations as possible that are in common use in the Council and to find out their meaning.

TASK 1

Start your list of abbreviations and their meaning by putting down the ones that you have already come into contact with. If you think you know what they mean, put this down also.

Check this with your supervisor.

TASK 2

Your supervisor will be able to add to your list, but he/she will only give you the initials or the terms used. You will need to find out what they mean by talking to other people you work with and by looking up meanings in trade or technical manuals.

TASK 3

You will be surprised both by the length of your list and how quickly you start to use the 'new language' yourself. Think of ways in which you can organise this information for easy reference.

Check with your supervisor that your information is correct before you make your final list.

TASK 4

Put your list in a place where you can make quick and easy reference to it. It is unlikely that your list will be totally complete, so when you come across a new abbreviation or technical term that you don't understand, make a note of it and ask what it means.

This next part of the project asks you to do a broad investigation in to the abbreviations used in job titles e.g., M.D. or C.E.O and professional qualifications or titles e.g., M.I.P.M. which sometimes follow names.

TASK 5

Discuss with your supervisor how you propose to tackle this next stage in your project. Pay particular attention to the problems you are likely to encounter and ways in which they might be overcome. Your supervisor will give you the names of people you should talk to in order to find out the information you need.

Telephone each person, explain what you are doing and ask if you can arrange to come to talk to them. You will need to explain your project and the information you want from them.

When you go to the arranged interview, be punctual and polite.

TASK 6

Organise the information you get under the following headings :

INITIAL or ABBREVIATION USED	JOB TITLE	NAME	EXT: NO.	OFFICE or DEPT.	PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION USED.
CPO	Chief Personnel Officer	E.D.LAMB	34	4A	M.I.P.M. (Member of the Institute of Personnel Management)

TASK 7

Professional qualifications that are abbreviated will need to be checked for accuracy. Your technical library, the library at college, or your public library may have a dictionary in which you can look up and check that you have the correct initials recorded. It is very important to get these right as they tell customers and clients the professional expertise of staff.

TASK 8

Now that you have collected and checked your information plan how you are going to present it:

- alphabetical order, by name or by department?
- order of seniority in the Company?

You may have a different idea.

Discuss this with your supervisor. When he/she agrees, make out your final list. If it is possible put the list on to the word processor, which will make the up-dating a much easier process.

TASK 9

Discuss with your supervisor who in the Company should be given a copy of this list and arrange the circulation procedures.

TASK 10

During your time with the Company take responsibility for updating this list. This will be especially useful if there are personnel changes within the Company or a member of staff adds to his/her professional qualifications.

FURTHER ACTION

TASK 11

M.I.P.M., M.I.T.D., etc.

You now know what these mean or how to find out what they mean, but do you know how you acquire them? Why are they important? Does it mean that someone who has M.I.P.M. after his/her name is a better personnel manager than some one who hasn't?

What do you think? What does your group of fellow trainee's think?

Ask your off-job tutor if you could discuss this during one of your off-job sessions. If he/she agrees, be prepared to lead the discussion. You will probably find that most of your group have no idea of the range or professional qualifications that exist.

TRAINEE REVIEW

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM IN AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE AND DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR AND TUTOR.

1/ Were you offered a selection of Projects to choose from? If so, why did you choose this one?

2. What did you think of it? Was it - easy, hard, interesting or boring?

3/ What did you learn? (Look at the list of Purposes).

4/ Did you learn something which was not on the list of Purposes?

5/ Did you need help with any particular part of the Project? What kind of help did you get?

6/ Were there any words in the Project that you did not understand? Please list them.

7/ Do you think you could use what you learned in another job, or outside work?

8/ Has this Project helped you decide whether you need further training in certain areas?

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SUPERVISOR REVIEW

Please refer to Supervisor's Notes.

Please read the questions included under Trainee Review.

Please complete the Assessment Form and discuss your assessment with the trainee before initialling it to show that you both agree with the assessment.

COMMENTS:

ASSESSMENT

explanatory notes

In completing this wbp the trainee has the opportunity to demonstrate competence in the CORE SKILLS listed on the attached form.

The first two columns list the wbp Tasks and the CORE SKILLS which occur within them.

You are asked to assess the trainee's competence in these CORE SKILLS according to the amount of support from you that the trainee needed, for example:-

1) if a trainee is asked to "find information from written sources" and you provide the trainee with all the sources of that information, together with telling the trainee where to look in any particular source, then that trainee is obviously being given much more support in finding that information than a trainee who identifies the sources and extracts correct information unaided;

2) if a trainee is asked to undertake a task which involves "noticing the needs of customers or clients", and needs considerable prompting to approach a customer, then that trainee is obviously being given more support than a trainee who takes the initiative in approaching the customer.

To be regarded as fully competent in the CORE SKILLS, the trainee should need to be offered no more support than you would normally give to any experienced worker.

Most of the time job competence and CORE SKILLS competence are likely to be the same, but sometimes this may not be so. For instance, a trainee involved in machining a particular component may be competent so far as planning the work is concerned (a CORE SKILL), but may not have reached experienced worker speeds (an occupational skill).

Please tick the appropriate box and initial in the space provided, after you have discussed your assessment with the trainee and agreed any further training required.

ASSESSMENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE CLEAR AS MUD WBP NO M/01/029 DATE

TRAINEE'S NAME SUPERVISOR'S NAME

WBP TASK NO	CORE SKILLS ASSESSED	NEEDED A LOT OF ASSISTANCE	NEEDED SOME ASSISTANCE	LITTLE OR NO ASSISTANCE		COMMENTS INCLUDING NO OPPORTUNITY	AGREED INITIALS	
				NEEDS MORE PRACTICE	COMPETENT		TRAINEE	SUPERVISOR
1,3,4 8.	7.3 Provide information in writing, and by means of tables and diagrams.							
2	6.1 Find out information by speaking to other people.							
2	6.2 Find out information from written sources.							
3.4.8 (11)	9.6 Plan how to present information.							
5,9	8.6 Discuss with other people in the workplace how things are to be done.							
5 (11)	7.1 Provide information by speaking to other people in the workplace.							
6	10.2 Decide which category something belongs to.							
7	11.5 Check the accuracy of written information.							

TASK NUMBERS IN ( ) ARE OPTIONAL.